

2 A
RESOLUTION
Of some
CASES
O F
CONSCIENCE
Which respect
Church-Communion.

H. Sherlock VIZ. Dean of St. Pauls

- I. Whether to Communicate with some Church, especially in such a divided State of the Church, be a necessary Duty, Incumbent on all Christians.
- II. Whether Constant Communion be a necessary Duty, where Occasional Communion is Lawful.
- III. Whether it be Lawful to Communicate with two Churches, which are in a State of Separation from each other.

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L O N D O N,

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RESOLUTION

CASES

CONSCIENCE

Church of England

Resolved

That

Resolved

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Resolved

A RESOLUTION

Of some

CASES of CONSCIENCE,

Which respect

Church-Communion.

IN order to state such cases as particularly relate to Church-Communion with all possible clearness, it will be necessary to premise a brief explication of some words, which must be used in questions of this nature, but are not so commonly understood.

As, 1. What is meant by a Church, and a Christian Church.

2. What Church Communion is.

3. What is meant by Fix'd Communion and by Occasional Communion.

First, What is meant by a Church. Now the plainest description I can give of a Church is this, *That the Church is a Body or Society of Men separated from the rest of the World, and United to God, and to themselves by a Divine Covenant.* I shall briefly explain this

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description to fit it to the meanest understanding.

1. Then a Church is a Body or Society of Men, for I speak only of the Church in this World, and therefore shall not enter into that dispute, in what sense Angels belong to the Church.

And when I call the Church a *Body* or *Society* of Men, I oppose a *Body* to single *Individuals*, or particular Men, and to a *confused Multitude*, without any order or Union among themselves. For tho the Church consists of particular Men, and when their Numbers are encreased, of great Multitudes, yet the Church consists of such particular Men, not considered in a private and separate capacity, but as United into a regular Society, which is called a *Body*, in allusion to the natural Body, in which all the parts and members are United in an exact Order. *Ex. 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100.* but of Peace, as in all the Churches of the Saints. And if the meanest Societies cannot subsist without Order wherein their strength and beauty and usefulness consist, much less the Church of God, which is a Society Instituted for the most spiritual and Supernatural Ends.

And therefore we find, that God ordained a most exact Order and Government in the Jewish Church, which for the greater strength and Unity he formed into a religious Common-wealth: And our Blessed Saviour ordained the Apostles, and committed the Government of his Church to them, and their Successors, with a promise to be with them to the end of the World. And the Christian Church with respect to the firm and close Union and orderly Disposition of all its Parts, is not only called a *Body*, but a *Spiritual Building*, and *Holy Temple*, and the *House of God*.

Eph. 2. 21,
22.
1 Tim. 3.
15.

But

But then the Church is a Body, or *one* Body, in opposition to many bodies, for Christ has but one Body, and one Church, and he is the Saviour of this Body. The Jewish Church was but one, and therefore the Christian Church is but one, which is not a new distinct Church, but is grafted into the Jewish stock or Root. Believing Jews, and Christians being United into one Church, *built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.* Who unites Jews, and Gentiles into one Church, as the corner stone unites both sides of the House, and holds them together.

Rom. 11.
17, 18.

Upon the same account the Church is called the *Building*, the *House*, the *Temple* of God, and we know the Temple was but one, and was so ~~but one~~, by the express command and Institution of God. And for the same reason Christ tells us, that there should be but *one Fold under one Shepherd.*

John 10.
16.

And indeed it is extremely absurd and unreasonable to say, that the Christian Church, which is built upon the same foundation, which worships the same God and Saviour, which professes the same Faith, are Heirs to the same promises, and enjoy all privileges in common, should be divided into as distinct and separate bodies, tho of the same kind and nature, as *Peter, James* and *John*, are distinct Persons, tho they partake of the same common nature. That is, it is very absurd to say, that where every thing is common, there is not one Community. *Peter, and James, and John*, tho they partake of the same common nature, yet each of them have a distinct essence and subsistence of their own (as it must be in natural Beings, otherwise there could be but one Man in the World) and this makes them distinct Persons: But where the very nature and essence of a Body or Society consists in having all things com-

mon, there can be but one Body; and therefore if *one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all*, be common to the whole Christian Church, if there be no peculiar Priviledges, which belong to some Christians and not to all, to one part of the Church, and not to another, then by the Institution of Christ, there is but one Church, one Body, one Communion, one Household and Family: For where there is nothing to Distinguish and Separate, no Enclosures or Partitions of Divine Appointment, there can be, by Divine Institution, but one Body.

2. I add, that the Church is a Body or Society of Men separated from the rest of the World, or called out of the World, as *ἐκκλησία*, from whence *Ecclesia* is derived, may signifie, and is so expounded by many Divines, upon which account the Christians are so often called, the *κλητοι*, and *ἐκλεκτοι*, the Called and Chosen or Elect People of God, which signifies, that the Church is distinguished from the rest of the World by a peculiar and appropriate Faith, by peculiar Laws, by peculiar rites of Worship, and peculiar Promises and Priviledges, which are not common to the whole World, but only to those, who are received into the Communion of the Church. But there is no controverſie about this matter, and therefore I need add no more about it.

3. The Church is a Body of Men united to God and to themselves by a Divine Covenant: The Church is united to God, for it is a Religious Society, instituted for the Worship of God; and they are united among themselves, and to each other, because it is but one Body, which requires a union of all its parts; as I have already shewed, and shall discourse more presently. But the chief thing to be observed here is this, that this union with God, and to each other, which

which constitutes a Church, is made by a *Divine Covenant*. Thus it was in the Jewish Church, God entered into Covenant with *Abraham*, and chose him and his Posterity for his Church and Peculiar People, and gave him Circumcision for a Sign and Seal of this Covenant. And under the Gospel God hath made a new Covenant with mankind, in and by his Son Jesus Christ, who is *the Mediator of a Better Covenant, founded upon better Promises*; and this Gospel Covenant is the foundation of the Christian Church. For the Christian Church is nothing else, but such a Society of Men, as is in Covenant with God through Christ.

I suppose all men will grant, that God only can make or constitute a Church. For such persons, if there were any so absurd, are not worth disputing with, who dare affirm the Church to be a human Creature, or the invention of Men.

And I think it is as plain, that the only visible way God has of forming a Church (for I do not now speak of the invisible operations of the Divine Spirit) is by granting a Church-Covenant, which is the Divine Charter, whereon the Church is founded, and investing some persons with Power and Authority, to receive others into this Covenant, according to the terms and conditions of the Covenant, and by such Covenant Rites and Forms of Admission, as he is pleased to institute, which under the Gospel is Baptism, as under the Law it was Circumcision.

To be taken into Covenant with God, and to be received into the Church, is the very same thing. For the Church is a Society of Men, who are in Covenant with God. That can be no Church, which is not in Covenant with God, he is no member of the Church, who is not at least visibly admitted into Gods Covenant, and whoever is in Covenant with God, is,

is made a member of the Church, by being admitted into Covenant.

Now before I proceed, I shall briefly observe some few things, which are so plain and evident, if these Principles be true, that I need only name them, and yet are of great use for the resolution of some following cases.

As 1. That a Covenant-state and Church-state is the same thing.

2. That every profess Christian, who is received into Covenant, as such, is a Church member.

3. That nothing else is necessary to make us members of the Christian Church but only Baptism, which is the Sacrament of our admission into the Christian Covenant. For if Baptism, which gives us right to all the Priviledges of the Covenant, does not make us Church members, then a Church-state is no part of the Covenant; then a man may be in Covenant with God through Christ, and yet be no member of Christ; or he may be a member of Christ and no member of his Body, which is the Church.

4. That no Church-state can depend upon human Contracts and Covenants, for then a Church would be a human Creature, and a human Constitution; whereas a Church can be founded only upon a Divine Covenant. It is true, no man, who is at age, can be admitted to Baptism till he profess his Faith in Christ, and voluntarily undertake the Baptismal Vow; but the Independent Church-Covenant betwixt Pastor and People, is of a very different Nature from this, unless any man will say, that the voluntary contract and Covenant, which the Independents exact from their members, and wherein they place a Church-state, be part of the Baptismal Vow. If it be not, then they found the Church upon a human Covenant, for Christ

Christ hath made but one Covenant with Mankind, which is contained in the Vow of Baptism. If it be, then no Man is a Christian, but an Independent, and then they would do well to shew, how the Baptismal Vow, which is but one and the same for all Mankind, determines one Man to be a fixt member of Dr. *Owens* Church, another of Mr. *Griffiths*, or any other Independent Pastors; and if they could get over this difficulty, there is another still, why they exact this Church-Covenant of Baptized Christians, before they will admit them to their Communion; if Baptism makes them members of their Church.

This I think makes it plain, that the Independent Church-Covenant is no part of the Baptismal Vow, and then it is no part of the Christian Covenant; and if there be no true Church-state, but what depends on such human Contracts, then the Church owes its being to the will of Men, not to the Covenant of God.

5. I observe farther, how absurd it is to gather Churches out of Churches, which already consist of Baptized Christians. Christianity indeed separates us from the rest of the World, but surely it does not separate Christians from each other. The Apostles only undertook to Convert Jews and Heathens to the Christian Faith, and to make them members of the Christian Church, which is a state of separation from the World; but these Men Convert Christians from Common Christianity, and the Communion of the universal Church, to Independency. If the Church be founded on a divine Covenant, we know no Church but what all Christians are made members of by Baptism, which is the universal Church, the one Body and Spouse of Christ. And to argue from the Apostles gathering Churches from among Jews and Heathens,

Heathens, to prove the gathering Churches out of a Christian and National Church, must either conclude, that a Church, and Church-state is a very indifferent and Arbitrary thing, and that Men may be very good Christians, and in a safe condition without it; or that Baptized Christians, who are not members of a particular Independent Church, are no better than Jews and Heathens, that is, that Baptism it self though a Divine Sacrament and Seal of the Covenant, is of no value, till it be confirmed and ratified by a human Independent Covenant.

6. I observe, that if the Christian Church be founded on a Divine Covenant, on that new Covenant, which God hath made with Mankind in Christ, then there is but one Church of which all Christians are members, as there is but one Covenant into which we are all admitted by Baptism. For the Church and the Covenant must be of an equal extent. There can be but one Church founded upon one Covenant, and all who have an interest in the same Covenant, are members of the same Church.

And therefore, tho the distance of place, and the necessities and conveniences of Worship and Discipline, may, and has divided the Church into several parts and members, and particular Churches, yet the Church cannot be divided into two or more distinct and separate Churches, for that destroys the unity of the Church: and unless they could divide the Covenant also, two Churches, which are not members of each other, cannot partake in the same Covenant, but the guilty Divider forfeits his interest in the Covenant without a new grant.

A Prince indeed may grant the same Charter to several distinct Cities and Corporations, but then tho the matter of the Charter be the same, their right to

it depends upon distinct Grants. But if he grant a Charter for the Erecting of such a Corporation, and confine his Charter to the members of that Corporation, those who wilfully separate themselves from this Corporation to which this Charter was granted, forfeit their interest in the Charter, and must not think to Erect a new distinct Corporation by the same Charter.

Thus it is here, God hath made a Covenant of grace with Mankind in Christ, and declares that by this one Covenant, he unites all the Disciples of Christ into one Body and Christian Church, who shall all partake of the Blessings of this Covenant. By Baptism we are all received into this Covenant, and admitted members of this one Church; now while we continue in the Unity of this Body, it is evident, that we have a right to all the Blessings of the Covenant, which are promised to this Body, and to every member of it. But if we divide our selves from this Body, and set up distinct and separate Societies, which we call Churches, but which are not members, nor live in Communion with the one Catholick Church, we cannot carry our Right and Title to the Covenant out of the Church with us.

The Gospel-Covenant is the common Charter of the Christian-Church, and if we are not contented to enjoy these Blessings in common with other Christians we must be contented to go without them. For it is not a particular Covenant, which God makes with particular Separate Churches, but a general Covenant made with the whole Body of Christians, as United in one Communion, and therefore that, which no particular Church has any interest in, but as it is a member of the universal Church.

God hath not made any Covenant in particular with the Church of *Geneva*, of *France* or *England*, but

with the one Body and Church of Christ, all the World over; and therefore the only thing, that can give us in particular a right to the Blessings of the Covenant, is, that we observe the conditions of this Covenant, and live in Unity and Communion with all true Christian Churches in the World, which makes us members of the Catholick Church, to whom the Promises are made.

Secondly, The next thing to be explained is, what is meant by Church-Communion. Now Church-Communion signifies no more then Church-Fellowship and Society, and to be in Communion with the Church is to be a member of the Church; and this is called Communion, because all Church members have a common right to Church Priviledges, and a common Obligation to all those Duties and Offices, which a Church relation Exacts from them.

I know this word *Communion* is commonly used to signify a Personal and presential Communion in Religious Offices: as when Men pray, and hear, and receive the Sacrament of the Lords Supper together, they are said to be in Communion with one another and to live in Communion with that Church, with which they joyn in all Acts of Worship.

Now we must acknowledge, that Publick Acts of Worship performed in the Communion of the Church, are an Exercise of Christian Communion, but Church-Communion is something antecedent to all the Acts and Offices of Communion. For no Man has a right to any Act of Christian Communion, but he, who is in a State of Communion with the Christian Church.

What natural Union is in natural Bodies, that Communion is in Bodies Politick, whether Civil or Religious Societies; a member must be vitally united to the Body, before it can perform any natural Action.

or Office of a member; before the Eye can see, or the Feet can walk, or the Ears can hear; and the union of the Eye, or Foot, to the Body, does not consist in seeing or walking, but seeing and walking are the effects of this Union.

Thus in a Body Politick, when Men by any common Charter are United into one Society, they become one common Body, or one Communion; and this gives them right to all the privileges of that Body, and obliges them to all the Duties and Offices, which their Charter requires of them; but should any Man, who is not regularly admitted into this Society, pretend to the same Privileges, or do such things, as are required of those, who are members of this Body, this would be so far from being thought an Act of Communion with them, that it would be censured as an unjust Usurpation. Should a Man, who is no Citizen of London, open his Shop, and drive a trade as other Citizens do, or give his Vote at a Common-Hall, and in all other cases Act like a Citizen, this would not make him a Citizen, but an Intruder. He is a Foreigner still, and his presuming to Act like a Citizen, when he is none, is no Act of Communion with that Body, of which he is no member, but justly exposes him to censure and punishment.

Thus it is in the Christian Church, which is one Body and Society united by a Divine Covenant. Our Communion with the Church consists in being members of the Church, which we are made by Baptism: The exercise of this Communion consists in all those Offices and Duties, which all the members of the Church are obliged to, and which none have any right to perform, but they; such as praying and receiving the Lords Supper together, &c.

Now should any Man who is no member of the Church, nor owns himself to be so, intrude into the Church, and Communicate in all holy Offices, this can be no more called an Act of Communion, than it can be said to make him a member of the Church, of which he is no member, and resolved not to be: Prayers, and receiving the Sacraments, &c. are Acts of Communion, when performed by Church-members in the Communion of the Church; but they are no Acts of Communion, when performed by those, who are no Church-members, tho' to serve a turn, they thrust themselves into the Society of the Church.

As for Instance, suppose a member of a Presbyterian, or Independant Conventicle, should, for reasons best known to himself, at some critical time, come to his Parish Church, and there hear the Common-Prayer, and Sermon, and receive the Lords Supper, according to the order of the Church of *England*, does this make this Man a member of the Church of *England*, with which he never Communicated before, and it is likely, will never do again? If it does not, all this is no Act of Communion, which can be only between the members of the same Body.

So that to be in Church-Communion, does not signify, meerly to perform some such Acts, which are Acts of Communion in the members of the Church, but since the decay of Church Discipline, may sometimes be performed by those, who are not members, which is such an abuse, as would not have been allowed in the Primitive Church, who denyed their Communion to Schismatics, as well as to the Excommunicate upon other accounts: but to be in Church-Communion signifies to be a member of the Church, to be Embodied and Incorporated with it, and I suppose, what that means, every one knows, who understands what

what it is to be a member of any Society, of a City, or any Inferior Corporation; which consists of Privilege and Duty, and requires all those, who will enjoy the benefits of such a Society, to discharge their respective trusts and obligations.

To be in Communion with, or to be a member of the Church, includes a Right and Title to all those Blessings, which God hath promised to his Church, and an obligation to all the Duties and Offices of Church Society; as Subjection to the Authority, Instructions, Censures of the Church; a Communion in Prayers, and Sacraments, and other Religious Offices, and he who despises the Authority, or destroys the Unity of the Church, renounces his membership and Communion with it. These things are extremely plain, and though Men may cavil for disputes sake, yet must needs convince them, that no Man is in Communion with a Church, which he is not a member of, tho' through the defect of Discipline, he should sometimes be admitted to some Act of Communion with it; and I shall observe some few things from hence of great use.

1. That Church-Communion primarily and principally respects the universal Church, not any particular Church or Society of Christians. For to be in Church-Communion signifies to be a member of the Church, or Body of Christ, which is but one all the World over. Church Communion does not consist in particular Acts of Communion, which can be performed only among those, who are present, and Neighbours to each other, but in membership: now a member is a member of the whole Body, (not meerly of any part of it,) how large soever the Body be. All the Subjects of *England*, those, who live at *St. Davids*, and those at *Tarmouth*, who never saw, nor con-

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verſt with each other, are all members of the ſame Kingdom, and by the ſame reaſon, this membership may extend to the remotest part of the World, if the Body, whereof we are members, reach ſo far.

And therefore we may obſerve, that Baptiſm, which is the Sacrament of our Admiſſion into the Covenant of God, and the Communion of the Church, does not make us members of any particular Church, as ſuch, but of the Univerſal Church; and I obſerved before, that a Church-State, which is the ſame thing, with Church-Communion, is founded only on a Divine Covenant; and therefore ſince there is no other Divine Covenant to make us members of particular Churches, as diſtinguiſht from the Univerſal Church, ſuch particular Church-membership is at beſt but a human Invention, and indeed nothing elſe but a Schiſm from the Univerſal Church: which alone, if well conſidered, is a ſufficient confutation of Independency, which is a particular Church-State, as diſtinguiſht from all other Churches and Societies of Chriſtians.

2. I obſerve further, that tho' the exerciſe of Church Communion, as to moſt of the particular Duties and Offices of it, muſt be confined to a particular Church and Congregation (for we cannot Actually joyn in the Communion of Prayers and Sacraments, &c. but with ſome particular Church) yet every Act of Chriſtian Communion, though performed in ſome particular Church, is and muſt be an Act of Communion with the whole Catholick Church, Praying, and Hearing, and receiving the Lords Supper together, does not make us more in Communion with the Church of *England*, than with any other true and Orthodox part of the Church, who in the Remotest parts of the World. The exerciſe of true Chriſtian Communion in a particular Church, is nothing elſe but

but the exercise of Catholick Communion in a particular Church, which the necessity of affairs requires, since all the Christians in the World cannot meet together for Acts of Worship ; But there is nothing in all these Acts of Communion, which does more peculiarly Unite us to such a particular Church, than to the whole Christian Church.

When we pray together to God, we Pray to him as the Common Father of all Christians, and do not challenge any peculiar interest in him, as members of such a particular Church, but as members of the whole Body of Christ : when we Pray in the Name of Christ, we consider him as the great High Priest, and Saviour of the Body, who powerfully interceeds for the whole Church and for us as members of the Universal Church. And we Offer up our Prayers and Thanksgiving, not only for our selves and those, who are present, but for all Christians all the World over, as our Fellow-members, and Praying for one another is the truest notion of Communion of Prayers ; for Praying with one another, is only in order to Praying for one another. And thus our Prayers are an exercise of Christian Communion, when we Pray to the same common Father, through the Merits and Mediation of the same common Saviour and Redeemer, for the same common Blessings, for our selves, and the whole Christian Church.

Thus when we meet together to Celebrate the Supper of our Lord, we do not meet as at a private Supper, but as at the common Feast, of Christians : and therefore it is not an Act of particular Church Fellowship, but of Catholick Communion. The Supper of our Lord does not signify any other kind of Union and confederation between those Neighbour Christians, who receive together in the same Church, than with
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the whole Body of Christ. The Sacramental Bread signifies and represents all those, for whom Christ died, that one Mystical Body, for which he Offered his Natural Body, which is the Universal Church; and our eating of this Bread signifies our Union to this Body of Christ, and therefore is considered, as an Act of true Catholick, not of a particular Church-Communion. And the Sacramental Cup is the Blood of the New Testament, and therefore represents our Communion in all the Blessings of the Covenant, and with all those, who are thus in Covenant with God. So that there is nothing particular in this Feast, to make it a private Feast, or an Act of Communion with a particular Church, considered as particular, but it is the common Feast of Christians, and an Act of Catholick Communion.

Which by the way plainly shews, how groundless that scruple is against mixt Communions, that Men think themselves defiled by receiving the Lords Supper with Men, who are vicious. For tho it is a great defect in Discipline, and a great reproach to the Christian Profession, when wicked Men are not censured, and removed from Christian Communion, yet they may as well pretend, that their Communion is defiled by bad Men, who Communicate in any other part of the Church, or any other Congregation, as in that, in which they live and Communicate: For this holy Feast signifies no other Communion between them, who receive at the same time, and in the same Company, than it does with all sincere parts of the Christian Church. It is not a Communion with any Persons considered as present, but it is a Communion with the Body of Christ and all true members of it, whether present or absent.

Those who separate from a National Church for the sake of corrupt professors, though they could form a Society as pure and holy, as they seem to desire, yet are Schismatics in it, because they confine their Communion to their own select Company, and Exclude the whole Body of Christians all the World over, out of it; their Communion is no larger than their gathered Church, for if it be, then they must still Communicate with those Churches, which have corrupt members, as all visible Churches on Earth have, (unless we will except Independents, because they have the confidence to except themselves) and then their Separation does not Answer its end, which is to avoid such corrupt Communions; and yet if they do confine their Communion to their own gathered Churches, they are Schismatics in dividing themselves from the Body of Christians; and all their Prayers and Sacraments are not Acts of Christian Communion, but a Schismatical Combination.

This does not prove indeed, that particular Churches are not bound to reform themselves, and to preserve their own Communion pure from corrupt members, unless all the Churches in the World, will do so too; because every particular Church, whether Diocesan, or National, has power to reform its own members, and is accountable to God for such neglects of Discipline: but it does prove, that no Church without the guilt of Schism, can renounce Communion with other Christian Churches, or set up a distinct and separate Communion of its own, for the sake of such corrupt members; which was the pretence of the *Novatian* and *Donatist* Schism of Old, and is so of the Independent Schism, at this day.

3. I observe further, that our obligation to maintain Communion with a particular Church, wholly

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results from our obligation to Catholick Communion. The only reason why I am bound to live in Communion with any particular Church, is because I am a member of the whole Christian Church, which is the Body of Christ, and therefore must live in Communion with the Christian Church; and yet it is Impossible to live in Communion with the whole Christian Church, without Actual Communion with some part of it; when I am in such a place, where there is a visible Christian Church; as no member can be United to the Natural Body, without its being United to some part of the Body, for the Union and Communion of the whole Body consists in the Union of all its parts to each other.

Every Act of Christian Communion, though performed in a particular Church, or Congregation, is not properly an Act of particular Church-Communion, but is the exercise of Communion with the whole Church and Body of Christ, as I have already proved; but it can be no Act of Communion at all, if it be not performed in the Communion of the Church, which it cannot be, unless it be performed in the Communion of some particular Church. And this is the only obligation, I know of, to Communion with any particular Church, that as I am a Christian, I am a member of the Body and Church of Christ, and in a State of Communion, and therefore am bound to maintain Actual Communion with the Christian Church, where-ever I find it, and by Communicating with the Church, wherein I live, if it be a Sound and Orthodox Member of the Christian Church, I maintain Communion with the whole Catholick Church, which is but one Body.

So that here is no choice, what Church we will Communicate with, for there is but one Church all the

the World over, with which we must Communicate; and therefore we have nothing else to do, but to judge, whether that part of the Church, wherein we live, be so Sound and Orthodox, that we may Communicate with it according to the Principles of Catholick Communion; and if it be, we are bound to Communicate with it, under Peril of Schism from the Catholick Church, if we do not.

4. From hence we may plainly learn the true notion of a Separate Communion, and Separate Church. For some Men seem to be greatly sensible of the sin and mischief of Schism and Separation; but then they use great art, so to confound the notion of Separation, as that neither they themselves, nor any one else, shall ever be able to understand what it is, whereas if they will allow, that there is, or ever can be, any such thing as Separation from the Church, it is as easie to understand, what Separation is, as what it is for a member to be divided from the Body.

For if there be but one Church, and one Communion, of which all true Christians, and Christian Churches, are, or ought to be members, then those Churches, which are not members of each other, are Separate Churches. It is not enough indeed to prove a Separation, that two Congregations meet in several places for Worship, for this is done by all the Parish-Churches of *England*, who are in the same Communion, but yet hold distinct and Separate Assemblies, as to Local Separation. Nor is it sufficient to prove, that there is no Separation, because these differing Churches agree in all the Articles of Faith, and essentials of worship; For thus the *Novatians* and *Donatists* did, who yet were Schismaticks from the Catholick Church. But where there are two Churches, which are not members of each other,

there is a Schism, tho they agree in every thing else, but in one Communion; and where Churches own each others Communion, as members of the same Body, there is no Schism, though they are as distant from each other in place, as East and West.

And it is as easie to understand, what it is for two Churches to be members of each other; but to make this as plain, as I can, and as far, as it is possible, to prevent all Evasions, and Subterfuges, I shall lay down some few rules according to the Principles of Catholick Communion, whereby we may certainly know, what Churches are in Communion with each other, and which are Separate and Schismatical Conventicles.

I. There must be but one Church, in one place, according to that Ancient Rule of the Catholick Church, that there must be but one Bishop in a City; and this was observed in the Apostolical times, that in the greatest and most Populous Cities, and where there were the greatest number of Converts, yet there was but one Church, such as *Jerusalem*, *Antioch*, *Ephesus*, &c. this is acknowledged by the Independents themselves, who endeavour hence to prove, that there were no more Christians in any of those Cities, than could meet together in one place for Acts of Worship, which is a mighty groundless Surmise, and not much for the credit of the Christian Church, as has been often shewn by learned Men, both Episcopal and Presbyterian Divines.

And there is an evident reason, why this should be so, because there is no other Rule of Catholick Communion for private Christians, but to Communicate in all Religious Offices, and all Acts of Government and Discipline, with those Christians, with whom they live; for to renounce the ordinary Communion of any Christians, or true Christian Church, is to di-

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vide the Unity and Communion of the Church; and to withdraw our selves from ordinary Communion with the Church, in which we live, into distinct and Separate Societies for Worship, is to renounce their Communion; and when there is not a necessary cause for it, is a Schismatical Separation.

So that distinct and particular Churches, which are in Communion with each other, must have their distinct bounds and limits, as every member has its Natural and proper place and situation in the Body. But when there is one Church within the Bowels of another, a new Church gathered out of a Church already constituted; and formed into a distinct and Separate Society, this divides Christian Communion, and is a notorious Schism. These Churches cannot be members of each other, because they ought to be but one Church, and therefore to form and gather a new Church, is to divide and Separate the members of the same Church from each other.

This is the plain case of the Presbyterian and Independent Churches, and those other Conventicles of Sectaries, which are among us; they are Churches in a Church, Churches formed out of the National Church, by which means Christians, who live together, refuse to Worship God in the same Assemblies, and have bitter Envyings and Contentions; for the Honour and Purity of their several Churches.

If all Christians are members of the one Body of Christ, nothing can justify the distinction of Christians into several Churches, but only such a distance of place, as makes it necessary and expedient to put them under the Conduct and Government of several Bishops, for the great Edification of the Church, in the more easie and regular Administration of Discipline, and all holy Offices; and therefore nothing can justify the

the gathering of a Church out of a Christian Church, and dividing Neighbour Christians into distinct Communion. Distinct Churches at a distance may be distinct Churches under their distinct Bishops; but yet in the same Communion; but distinct Churches in the same place can never be of the same Communion, for then they would Naturally Unite and Cement into one. There must either be Antibishops, or Schismatical Presbyters, set up in opposition to their Bishops, under different and opposite Rules of Worship and Discipline, which makes them Rival and opposite Churches, not members of each other. From hence I think, it plainly appears, that all Separation from a Church, wherein we live, unless there be necessary reasons for it, is Schism; and we cannot justify such distinct Churches within one another, from the examples of other distinct Churches, whose bounds, and limits, and jurisdiction also, are distinct and separate.

2. It is plain, those are Separate Churches, which divide from the Communion of any Church, from any dislike of its Doctrine, Government, or Worship, for in this case, it is plain, they leave the Church, and form themselves into a new Church, out of the Communion of the Church, from whence they went, because they did not think it safe to continue one Body with it.

This has often made me wonder, what those Men mean, who take all occasions to quarrel at our Constitution, and assign a great many reasons, why they cannot Communicate with us, and yet at the same time will not own, that they have made any Separation from us. What middle state now shall we find for these Men, who will neither continue in the Church, nor allow themselves to be out of it?

It is possible for two particular Churches to be in Communion with each other, and yet not Actually to Communicate together, because distance of place will not permit it; but for two Churches to renounce each others Communion, or at least to withdraw ordinary Communion from each other, from a professed dislike, and yet still to continue in a state of Communion with one another, is a down right contradiction. To be in Communion is to be members of the same Body and Society, and he that can prove, and he that can believe, two opposite Societies, founded upon contrary principles, and Acting by contrary Rules, and pursuing contrary ends, to the Ruin and Subversion of each other, to be the same Body, and the same Society, are very wonderful Men to me.

3. Those are Separate Churches, who do not own each others members, as their own Actual Communion during our residence in any certain place, must be confined to that particular Church, in which we live, if it be a sound part of the Christian Church; but Church-membership is not confined to any particular Church. I am no otherwise a member of any particular Church, then I am of the Universal Church, which gives me a right of Membership and Communion in all the particular Churches of the World. Now I would ask whether every Baptized Christian, who by Baptism is made a member of the Catholick Church, and has not forfeited this right by a Scandalous life, be *ipso facto* a member of an Independent Church; if he be not (as it is plain, by the constitution of Independency, he is not, for Independent Church-membership is not founded on Baptism, but on a particular Church-Covenant;) then Independency is a Separate Communion from the Catholick Church; for the members of the Catholick Church

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are not by being so, made the members of an Independent Church; and therefore an Independent Church is a distinct and separate Body from the Catholick Church.

Nay I would know whether a member of one Independent Church by being so, becomes a member of another Independent Church; if he does not, as it is plain, he don't, (for every Independent Church is founded upon a particular Church-Covenant between such a particular Pastor and particular members) then every Independent Church is a distinct and Separate Body from all other Independent Churches, and so they are all Schismatics to each other, as not preferring the Unity of the Body.

And tho Independent Churches should be so civil to each other, as to admit each others members to some Acts of Communion, yet this is matter of courtesie, not of right, and therefore their constitution is Schismatical. It is like two Neighbour Families, which hold good correspondence with each other, and often visit one another, and Eat, and Drink together, but yet remain very distinct Families, and have all their concerns apart and separate. But the Christian Church is but one Household and Family, and whoever makes two Families of it, is a Schismatick.

Thus let me ask, whether the Episcopal, and Presbyterian Churches in the same Christian Kingdom, be one Church, and members of each other, and own each others members, as such, to be members of their own Body and Church; If they do not, as it is evident they don't, from their holding distinct and separate Assemblies, under a distinct kind and species of Government, which both of them assert to be instituted by Christ, and to be essential to the constitution of the Church, from their forming themselves into distinct Bodies,

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dies, under different Governors, which have no Communion, as such with each other, (which yet is essential to the Communion of particular Churches, that their Governors should be in Communion with each other) from their Condemning each others constitution, and particular modes of Worship, and their great endeavours to draw away members from each other; which necessarily supposes, that they do not look upon each others members, as their own. I say, if from these considerations it appears, that they are not, and do not think themselves to be, one Body, nor members of each other, then they are two separate Churches, and the Church, which makes the separation is the Schismatick.

And indeed we may as well say, that a Monarchy, and Aristocracy, and Democracy in the same Nation, with their distinct Governours, and distinct Subjects, and distinct Laws, that are always at Enmity and War with each other, are but one Kingdom, as to assert, that the Episcopal and Presbyterian Churches in *England*, are but one Church.

3. The last thing to be explained, is, what is meant by fixt or constant, and by occasional Communion. Now this is a question, which would grievously have puzzl'd St. *Cyprian* and St. *Austin* and other Ancient Fathers, who never heard but of one sort of Communion. For indeed there is no place for this distinction of constant and occasional Communion, according to the Principles of Catholick Communion. To be in Communion with the Church, is to be a member of the Church, and I take it for granted, that a member signifies a fixt and constant, not an occasional member; not a member, which is one day a member, and the next day upon his own voluntary choice is no member, which is a member or no member, just as

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occasion serves. And if Church-membership be a fixt and constant relation in it self considered, then the Duties of this relation are fixt and constant also. And therefore for the understanding of these Terms, which were unknown to Antiquity, we must consult the meaning of our Modern Authors, who were the first Inventors of them.

Now by fixt Communion they mean an Actual and constant Communicating with some one particular Church, as fixt members of it; occasional Communion is to Pray, and Hear, and receive the Sacrament, at some other Church, (of which they do not own themselves to be members) as occasion serves; that is, either to gratifie their own Curiosity, or to serve some secular end, or to avoid the Imputation of Schism.

Now this distinction is owing to such Principles, as I have evidently proved to be very great mistakes.

For if to be in Communion with the Church signifie to be a member of it, and that not of any particular Church, as distinguish'd from the whole Catholick Church, but to be a member of the one Body of Christ, and of every sound part of it; then our Communion with the Church is as fixt, as our relation and membership is, and I think no Man, who understands himself, will talk of an occasional member.

If no Man can perform any Act of Communion with a Church, of which he is no member (since all Acts of Communion have a necessary relation to a state of Communion; and that, which is an Act of Communion in a member, is no Act of Communion, when performed by him, who is no member, as I have already proved) then it is as plain a contradiction to talk of an occasional Act of Communion, as of occasional membership; and there can be no place for

for occasional Communion with a Church, of which we are no members, unless we will say, that a Man, who is not in Communion, may exercise Acts of Communion with the Church.

If all the Acts of Christian Communion, which respect Christian Worship, such as Prayer, receiving the Lords Supper, &c. tho performed in a particular Church, be not Acts meerly of a particular Church-Communion, but of Catholick Communion, with the whole Christian Church, and every sound part of it, then every true Catholick Christian, is not only in a fixt state of Communion with the Catholick Church, but lives in as constant an exercise of Christian Communion with all Sound and Orthodox Churches, as he does with that Church, in which he lives; for every Act of Worship, which is an Act of Communion with that particular Church, in which it is performed (if that Church be in Catholick Communion) is an Act of Communion with the whole Catholick Church, and therefore the very exercise of Christian Communion, is equally fixt and constant, or equally occasional with the whole Catholick Church.

There is a sense indeed, wherein we may be said to be members of one particular Church considered as distinct from all other particular Churches, but that principally consists in Government and Discipline; every Christian is a member of the whole Christian Church, and in Communion with it, but he is under the immediate Instruction and Government of his own Bishop, and Presbyters, and is bound to Personal Communion with them; and this constitutes a particular Church, in which all Acts of Worship, and all Acts of Discipline and Government, are under the direction and conduct of a particular Bishop. And when Neighbour Bishops unite into one Body, and

agree upon some common Rules of Government, and the Administration of Religious Offices, this makes them a Patriarchal or National Church, and thus by submitting to the Government and Discipline of such particular or united Bishops, we become members of a Dioceſan or National Church, conſidered as diſtinct from other Dioceſan or National Churches; But this does not confine our Church-membership and Communion to ſuch a particular Church, tho it ſtrictly oblige us to conform to the Worſhip, and Discipline, and Government of that Church, wherein we live, while it impoſes nothing on us inconſiſtent with the Principles of Catholick Communion.

But tho particular Chriſtians are more peculiarly obliged to obſerve the Rites and Uſages, and to ſubmit to the Government and Discipline of the Church, wherein they live, and to maintain Perſonal Communion with it, (and upon this account may in a peculiar manner be called the members of that Church) yet every Act of Communion performed in this particular Church is an Act of Catholick Communion; and an exerciſe of Chriſtian Communion with the whole Church, and every ſound part of it. Baptiſm makes us members of the whole Church, and gives us a right to Communion with every ſound part of it; every Act of Chriſtian Communion in a particular Church is a vertual Communion with the whole Church, with all particular Churches, which live in Communion with each other; and notwithstanding my relation to a particular Church, by my conſtant Abode and Habitation in it, when ever I travel into any other Church, I Communicate with them as a member; ſo that wherever I Communicate, whether in that Church, in which I uſually live, or in any other particular Church, where I am accidentally preſent, my
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Communion is of the same Nature, that is, I Communicate as a member of the Church, and it is Impossible, I should Communicate otherwise; for I have no right to Communion, but as a member, and nothing I can do, can be an Act of Communion, if I be not, and do not own my self to be a member.

And yet this is the occasion of this mistake about Fixt and Oecasional Communion; that according to the Laws of our Church, which are founded on great and wise reasons, and indeed according to the Laws of Catholick Communion, every Christian is bound to Communicate with that part of the Church, wherein he lives; now Men may have Houses in different Parishes, or distinct Diocesses, or may Travel into other parts of the Country, and Communicate with the Churches, which they find in those places, where they are, or they may sometimes go to Prayers, or hear a Sermon, or receive the Lords Supper at another Parish-Church; now our ordinary Communion with those Churches, where our constant Abode is, may be called constant Communion, and our Communion with those Churches, which we accidentally visit, and Communicate with, may be called occasional Communion; and all this without Schism, because we still Communicate, either with the same National Church, or (which is often the case of Travellers) with some other sound part of the Catholick Church, of which we are also members; and so still keep in the same Communion, and Communicate with no Churches, but those, of which we own our selves members; as being all in the same Communion; as being either sincere members of the National or Catholick Church.

From hence our Dissenters Conclude, that their Communion with an Independent, or Presbyterian, Church,

Church, of which they profess themselves fixt members, is, as constant with their occasional Communion with the Church of *England*, when to serve some present turn, they hear the Prayers, and receive the Sacraments with us; as our fixt Communion with our Parish-Churches is, with our occasional Communion, with other Parish-Churches; which no Body accounts Schism, tho when it is too frequent and causeless, it is a great disorder.

But the difference between these two is vastly great, for in the First case, we only Communicate with such Churches, which are all in Communion with each other, and therefore he, who is a member of one, is a member of them all, and Communicates with them, wherever he is, as a member. But he, who is a fixt member of a Presbyterian, or Independent Church, cannot Communicate so much as occasionally, with the Church of *England*, as a member, because he is a member not only of another particular but of a separate Church; and it is impossible for any Man, who is one with himself, to be a member of two separate Churches, and whatever Acts of Worship we joyn in with other Churches, of which we are no members, they are not properly Acts of Communion.

Having thus premised the explication of these terms, what is meant by *Church*, and what is meant by *Church-Communion*, and what is meant by *Fixt or Constant*, and *occasional Communion*, the right understanding of these things, will make it very easie to resolve those cases, which Immediately respect Church-Communion, and I shall Instance in these three.

1. Whether Communion with some Church or other, especially when the Church is divided into so many Sects and Parties, be a necessary Duty, incumbent on all Christians.

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2. Whether constant Communion with that Church, with which occasional Communion is Lawful, be a necessary Duty.

3. Whether it be Lawful for the same person, to Communicate with two separate Churches.

Case 1. Whether Communion with some Church or other, especially when the Church is divided into so many Sects and Parties, be a necessary Duty incumbent on all Christians. Case 1.

Now methinks the resolution of this is as plain, as whether it be necessary for every Man to be a Christian. For every Christian is Baptized into the Communion of the Church, and must continue a Member of the Church, till he renounce his Membership by Schism, or Infidelity, or be cast out of the Church by Ecclesiastical censures.

Baptism incorporates us into the Christian Church, that is, makes us Members of the Body of Christ, which is his Church and is frequently so called in Scripture. For there is but *one Body and one Spirit*, Eph. 5. 23.
 4. 4. one Christian Church, which is animated and 4. 12.
 governed by the one Spirit of Christ. And we are all Baptized into this one Body. *For as the Body is one, and* Col. 1. 18.
hath many Members, and all the members of that one Body, being many, are one Body, so also is Christ, that is, the Christian Church, which is the Body of Christ, of which he is the Head; *for by one Spirit we are all Baptized into one Body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or Free, and are all made to drink into one Spirit; for the body is not one member, but many.* 1 Cor. 12. 12, 13.

Now I have already proved, that Church-Communion is nothing else, but Church-Membership, to be in Communion with the Church, and to be a member of the Church, signifying the same thing. And I think, I need not prove, that to be in a state of Communion:

munion contains both a right, and an Obligation to Actual Communion. He, who is a member of the Church, may Challenge all the Priviledges of a member, among which Actual Communion is none of the least; to be admitted to all the Acts and Offices of Christian-Communion, to the Communion of Prayers and Sacraments, and all other Christian Duties, which no Man who is not a member of the Church, has any right to. And he who is a member, is bound to perform all those Duties and Offices, which are Essential to Church Communion, and therefore is bound to Communicate with the Church in Religious Assemblies, to joyn in Prayers and Sacraments, to attend publick Instructions, and to live like a member of the Church.

But to put this past all doubt, *that external and actual Communion is an essential Duty of a Church-member*, I shall offer these plain proofs of it.

1. That Baptism makes us Members of the visible Church of Christ, but there can be no visible Church without visible Communion, and therefore every visible Member, by vertue of his Membership, is bound to external and visible Communion, when it may be had.

2. This is essential to the notion of a Church, as it is a Body and Society of Christians. For all Bodies and Societies of Men are Instituted for the sake of some common Duties and Offices to be performed by the Members of it. A Body of Men is a Community, and it is a strange kind of Community, in which every Member may act by it self, without any Communication with other Members of the same Body. And yet such a kind of Body as this, the Christian Church is, if it be not an essential Duty of every Member, to live in the exercise of visible Communion with the Church,

Church, when he can. For there is the same Law for all Members, and either all or none, are bound to actual Communion.

But this is more absurd still, when we consider, that the Church is such a Body, as consists of variety of Members, of different Offices and Officers, which are of no use without actual and visible Communion of all its Members.

To what purpose did Christ appoint such variety of Ministers in his Church, *Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors, and Teachers, for the perfecting of the Saints, for the work of the Ministry, for the edifying of the Body of Christ*; to what purpose has he instituted a standing Ministry in his Church, to offer up the Prayers of the Faithful to God, to instruct, exhort, reprove, and administer the Christian Sacraments, if private Christians are not bound to maintain Communion with them, in all Religious Offices? Eph. 4. 11, 12.

3. Nay the Nature of Christian Worship obliges us to Church-Communion. I suppose, no Man will deny, but that every Christian is bound to Worship God according to our Saviours Institution: and what that is, we cannot learn better, than from the Example of the Primitive Christians, of whom St. Luke gives us this account, that *they continued Stedfast in the Apostles Doctrine, and Worship, and in breaking of Bread, and in Prayers.* Acts 2. 41.

That which makes any thing in a Strict sense, an Act of Church-Communion is, that it is performed in the Fellowship of the Apostles, or in Communion with the Bishops and Ministers of the Church; They are appointed to Offer up the Prayers of Christians to God in his Name; and therefore tho the private devotions of Christians are acceptable to God, as the Prayers of Church-Members, yet none but publick Prayers,

which are Offered up by Men who have their Authority from Christ, to Offer these Spiritual Sacrifices to God, are properly the Prayers of the Church, and Acts of Church-Communion. If then we must Offer up our Prayers to God according to Christ's Institution, that is, by the hands of persons Authorized and set apart for that purpose; we must of necessity joyn in the Actual and Visible Communion of the Church.

The Sacrament of the Lords Supper is the principal part of Christian Worship, and we cannot Celebrate this Feast, but in Church-Communion; for this is a *κοινωνία* a common Supper, or Communion-Feast, which in all Ages of the Church, has been administered by Consecrated Persons, and in Church-Communion; for it loses its Nature and Signification, when it is turned into a private Mass, so that if every Christian is bound to the Actual performance of true Christian Worship, he is bound to an Actual Communion with the Christian Church.

4. We may observe further; that Church Authority is exercised only about Church-Communion, which necessarily supposes, that all Christians, who are Church-Members and in a State of Communion, are bound to all the Acts of external and visible Communion with the Church. The exercise of Church Authority consists in Receiving in, or Shutting out of the Church. To receive into the Church, is to admit them to all external Acts of Communion, to Shut, or Cast out of the Church, is to deny them the external and visible Communion of the Church; not to allow them to Pray, or receive the Lords Supper, or perform any Religious Offices in the publick Assemblies of the Church. Now all this Church Authority would signifie nothing, were not External and Actual-Communion, both the Priviledge and Duty of every Christian; and yet

yet this is all the Authority Christ hath given to His Church.

5. And to confirm all this, nothing is more plain in Scripture, than that Separation from a Church, is to withdraw from the visible Communion of it, and there can be no Notion of Separation without this; now if Separation from Religious Assemblies be to break Communion, then to live in Communion with the Church requires our Actual Communicating with the Church in all Religious Duties.

And that this is the true Notion of Separation is easily proved from the most express testimonies; 2 Cor. 6. 17. *Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you: Where, come out from among them, and be ye separate,* plainly signifies, to forsake the Assemblies of Idolaters, not to Communicate with them in their Idolatrous Worship; So that not to joyn with any Men or Church in their Idolatrous Worship, is to Separate from their Communion, which is a very Godly Separation, when the Worship is Idolatrous and Sinful, but a Schismatical Separation, when it is not. Thus St. John tells us of the Ancient Hereticks, *They went out from us because they were not of us, for if they had been of us, they would, no doubt, have continued with us, but they went out, that they might be made manifest, that they were not all of us.* Where their going out from them, plainly signifies, their forsaking Christian Assemblies, upon which account the Author of the Epistle to the Hebrews admonishes the Christians, *not to forsake the Assembling of themselves together, as the manner of some is,* in which he refers to the Separation of those Ancient Hereticks.

1 John. 2. 19.

Heb. 10. 25.

And thus accordingly to have Fellowship or Communion with any, is to partake with them in their

Religious Mysteries. By this Argument St. Paul dissuades the *Corinthians* for Eating of the Idols Feast; because they were Sacrifices to Evil Spirits, and by partaking of those Sacrifices they had Communion with them. *But I say, that the things, which the Gentiles Sacrifice, they Sacrifice to Devils, and not to God, and I would not that you should have Fellowship with Devils. Ye cannot Drink the Cup of the Lord; and the Cup of Devils, ye cannot be partakers of the Lords Table, and of the Table of Devils.* So that, tho we must first be in a state of Communion with Christ, and his Church, must first be received into Covenant, and by Baptism be incorporated into the Christian Church, before we have any right to Communicate with this Church; yet no Man can preserve his Church-state without Actual Communion, no Man has Communion with Christ, or his Church, but he, who Actually Communicates in all Religious Offices, and Christian Institutions; a state of Communion confers a right to Communicate, but Actual Communion consists in the exercise of Communion; and a right to Communicate without Actual Communion is worth nothing, as no right or privilege is without the Exercise of it; for enjoyment consists in Acts, and all the Blessings of the Gospel, all the Blessings of Christian Communion, are conveyed to us by Actual Communion. So that if we would partake of the Blessings of Christ, if we would Reap the advantages of Church-Communion, we must live in Actual Communion, and not content our selves with a dormant and useless right, which we never bring into Act.

This is sufficient to prove, the necessity of Actual Communion with the Christian Church, when it may be had, for where it cannot be had, Non-Communion is no Sin, for we are not obliged to Impossibilities;

abilities; he who lives in a Country, or travels through
 any Country, where there is no true Christian Church
 to Communicate with, cannot enjoy Actual
 Communion; the right and Duty of Communion
 continues, tho necessity may suspend the Act. But
 the greater difficulty is, whether it be not Lawful,
 to suspend our Communion with any particular
 Churches, when we see the Church divided into a
 great many Parties and Factions, which refuse
 Communion with each other, which is the deplora-
 ble state of the Church at this day among us,
 Presbyterians, Independents, Anabaptists, Quakers,
 all Separate from the Church of *England*, and from
 each other, and from hence some conclude it Law-
 ful to suspend Communion with all the divided Par-
 ties, which is just such a reason for a Total suspension of
 Church-Communion, as the different and contrary
 opinions in Religion are for Scepticism and infidelity.
 Because there are a great many kinds of Religions in
 the World, and a great many divided Sects of the
 Christian Religion; therefore some Men will be of
 no Religion; and because the Christian Church is di-
 vided into a great many opposite and Separate Com-
 munities, therefore others will be of no Church; and the
 reason is as strong in one case, as it is in the other, that
 is, indeed it holds in neither: For it is possible to dis-
 cover, which is the true Religion, notwithstanding
 all these different and contrary persuasions about it,
 and it is equally possible to find out, which of these
 divided Communities is a true and Sound Member of
 the Catholick Church, and when we know that, we
 are bound to maintain Communion with it.

Indeed if such Divisions and Separations, excuse us
 from Actual Communion with the Church, Actual
 Communion never was, and is never likely to be a
 Duty

Duty l^ong together ; for there never was any state of the Church so happy long together, as to be without divisions ; even in the Apostles times, there were those, who Separated from the Communion of the Apostles, and set up private Conventicles of their own, and so it has been in all succeeding Ages of the Church, and so it is likely to continue, and if we are not bound to Communicate with the Church, while there are any Hereticks, or Schismaticks, who divide from the Church, farewell to all Church Communion in this World.

Should any Man indeed Travel into a Strange Country, and there find a Schism in the Christian Church, it were very fitting for him to Suspend Communion with either Party, till he had opportunity to acquaint himself with the state of the Controversie, so as to judge, which party is the Schismatick ; and then he is bound (if he understand their Language) to Communicate with the Sound and Orthodox part of the Catholick Church, which he finds in that place. But this does not reach the case of those, who are constant Inhabitants of the place, where the Schism is ; for they must not live in a Sceptical suspension of Communion all their days.

And there is one plain Rule to direct all Men in this Inquiry ; That wherever there is a Church Establish^t by publick Authority, if there be nothing Sinful in its Constitution and Worship, we are bound to Communicate with that Church, and to reject the Communion of all other Parties and Sects of Christians. For the advantage always lies on the side of Authority, no publick establishment can justify a Sinful Communion, but if there be nothing Sinful in the Communion of the National Church, which is Establish^t by publick Authority, to Separate from such a Church is
both

both disobedience to the Supreme Authority in the State, and a Schism from the Church.

But it will be convenient to consider, what these Men mean by suspending Communion. For is it Lawful for an *English* Man during these Church divisions among us, never to Worship God in any Publick and Religious Assemblies? Never to Pray, nor Hear, nor receive the Lords Supper together? If this were so, it were the most Effectual way in the World to thrust out all Religion.

But this they will not, they dare not say, and therefore by Suspending Communion they mean, that in case of such divisions they may refuse to enter themselves fixt and settled Members of any Church, but Communicate occasionally with them all.

But I have already observed how absurd this distinction of fixt and occasional Communion is. For no Act of Religion is an Act of Communion (not so much as of occasional Communion) which is not performed in the Communion of the Church; and no Man is in Communion with the Church, who is not a Member of it, and whoever is a Member of the Church is a fixt and not an occasional Member; and whatever Church he Communicates with, tho it may be, it is but once in a Year, or once in his life, as he occasionally Travels that way, yet he Communicates as a fixt Member of the Catholick Church, and of every Sound part of the Catholick Church; for a fixt Member does not signifie our fixt abode, or constant Acts of Communion in any particular Church, but our state of Communion, and fixt and permanent relation to the whole Christian Church, and every part of it, and therefore tho a particular Act of Communion may be performed upon some particular occasion with

with such a particular Church, yet it is not an Act of occasional, but of fixt Communion, because tho I Communicate but once and that occasionally, yet I Communicate as a Member of the Church, which is not an occasional but a fixt Relation.

So that when Men Communicate occasionally, as they speak, with all the different Parties of Christians in a divided Church, they either Communicate with none, or Communicate with all of them. If they perform these Acts of Communion, without owning their relation to them, as Members, then they are in Communion with none of them, notwithstanding all these pretended Acts of occasional Communion, and so they live in Communion with no Church, which yet I hope, I have made it appear to be the Duty of every Christian to do; if they Communicate with all these divided Parties, as Members, then they are in Communion with many Separate Churches, are Members of Separate and Opposite Bodies, that is, they are contrary to themselves, and on one side or other, are certain to be Schismatics, but this will appear further from considering the two following Cases.

Case 2.

Case 2. The Second Case is this; Whether constant Communion be a Duty, where occasional Communion is Lawful. I have already made it appear, that the very notion of constant and occasional Communion is absurd, and a Contradiction to all the principles of Catholick Communion, and therefore there is no place for this distinction, nor for this question, every Christian, as a Christian, is a fixt Member of the whole Christian Church, and of every Sound part of it, and for Men to talk of being Members of any one particular Church, in distinction from all other particular Churches, of which they will not own themselves Members, is a Schismatical notion of Church-Membership, because

it

it divides the Christian Church into distinct Memberships, and therefore into distinct Bodies, which makes the one Church and one Body of Christ, not one, but many Bodies: for if every particular Church has such a number of Members, which are Members only of that particular Church, wherein they are fixt, and are not Members of any other particular Church, then every particular Church is a distinct and entire Body by it self, which has particular Members of its own, which belong to no other Body; just as every particular Man has his own Body, which consists of such a number of Members, united to each other, and distinct from all other Bodies.

The plain state of the Case in short is this: Every true Christian is in Communion with the whole Christian Church, that is, is a Member of the whole Church; but he must perform the Acts of Communion in some particular Church, and the only allowable difference between constant and occasional Communion is this; that we must perform the constant Acts of Communion in that part of the Catholick Church, in which we constantly live, and Communicate occasionally with that part of the Church, in which we are occasionally present; and therefore there never can be any Competition between constant and occasional Communion in the same place. I cannot Communicate constantly with that Church in which I Communicate occasionally, unless I remove my Habitation, and turn an occasional presence into a constant and settled abode; nor can I without sin Communicate only occasionally with that Church, with which I may and ought to Communicate constantly, as being constantly present there, for this is only to do that sometimes, which I ought to do always. This is like a Mans living occasionally in his own House,

which signifies, that for the most part he is a stranger at home.

There cannot be two distinct Churches in the same place, one for occasional, and another for constant Communion, without Schism, For it is evident, these are two distinct Communions, and that our relation to them is as different, as it is to a House we live in, and to an Inn, where we lodge for a Night.

So that there is no foundation for this Inquiry among Men, who understand the true Principles of Catholick-Communion; It never can be a Case of Conscience, whether I should Communicate constantly or occasionally with such a Church, unless it be a Case of Conscience, whether I should live constantly or occasionally within the bounds and jurisdiction of such a Church; for where my constant abode is, there my constant Communion must be, if there be a true and sincere part of the Catholick-Church in that place, and where I am only occasionally, there I can only Communicate occasionally also.

But to meet with the distempers of this Age, and to remove those Apologies some Men make for their Schism, it is necessary to make this a question. For, in this divided state of the Church, there are a great many among us, who think, they cannot maintain constant Communion with the Church of *England*, as constant and fixt Members, who yet upon some occasions think, they may Communicate with us in all parts of Worship, and Actually do so.

Now when these Men, who are fixt Members, as they call it, of Separate Churches, think fit sometimes to Communicate in all parts of Worship with the Church of *England*, we charitably suppose, that Men, who pretend to so much tenderness of Conscience, and care of their Souls, will do nothing, not so much as once, which

which they believe, or suspect, to be sinful, at the time, when they do it; and therefore we conclude, that those, who Communicate occasionally with the Church of *England*, do thereby declare, that they believe, there is nothing sinful in our Communion; and we thank them for this good opinion they express of our Church, and earnestly desire to know, how they can justify their ordinary Separation from such a Church, as requires no sinful terms of Communion.

If any thing less than sinful terms of Communion can justify a Separation, then there can be no end of Separations and Catholick-Communion is an Impossible and Impracticable notion, that is, the Church of Christ neither is one Body, nor ever can be. For if Men are not bound to Communicate with a Church, which observes our Saviours Institutions, without any such corrupt mixtures, as make its Communion sinful, then there is no bounds to be set to the Fancies of Men, but they may new model Churches, and divide and subdivide without any end.

Is that a sound and Orthodox part of the Catholick-Church, which has nothing sinful in its Communion? If it be not, Pray what is it, that makes any Church Sound and Orthodox? If it be, upon what account is it Lawful, to Separate from a Sound and Orthodox Church? And may we not by the same reason Separate from the whole Catholick Church, as from any Sound part of it? Nay does not that Man Separate from the whole Catholick Church, who Separates from any Sound part of it? For the Communion of the Church is but one, and he, that divides and breaks this union, Separates himself from the whole Body.

Excepting the Independency of Churches (which I have proved above to be Schism in the very notion of it) the great Pleas for Separation from a Church, which has nothing sinful in its Communion, are the pretence of greater Edification, and purer Ordinances. But these are such Pleas, as must expose the Church to Eternal Schisms, because there are no certain Rules to judge of these matters, but the various and uncertain fancies of Men. What they like best, that shall be most for their Edification, and these shall be purer Ordinances, and till Men can agree these matters among themselves, which they are never likely to do, till they can all agree in the same Diet; or in their judgment and opinion about beauty, decency, fitness, convenience, they may and will divide without end; and if the Peace and Unity of the Church be so necessary a duty, it is certain, these Principles, which are so destructive to Peace and Unity, must be false, as to consider these things particularly, but very briefly.

What purer Administrations and Ordinances would Men have, than those of our Saviours own Institution, without any Corrupt and sinful mixtures, to spoil their virtue and efficacy? (as we suppose is acknowledged by those, who occasionally Communicate in all parts of our Worship, that there is nothing sinful in it) the purity of divine Administrations must consist in their agreement with the Institution, that there is neither any such defect or addition, as alters their Nature and destroys their Vertue. For the Efficacy of Gospel Ordinances depends upon their Institution, not upon particular modes of Administration, which are not expressly Commanded in the Gospel; and he, who desires greater purity of Ordinances than their conformity to their Institution, who thinks, that Baptism and the Lords Supper lose their Efficacy, unless they

they be administred in that way, which they themselves best like, are guilty of gross Superstition, and attribute the vertue of Sacraments to the manner of their administration, not to their Divine Institution.

And what Men talk of greater Edification is generally as little understood as the other; for Edification is building up, and is applied to the Church, considered as Gods House and Temple, and it is an odd way of building up the Temple of God, by dividing and Separating the parts of it from each other.

This one thing well considered, *viz.* That *οικοδομη* Edification or Building, according to the Scripture notion of it, does always primarily refer to, or at least include, Church-unity and Communion, is sufficient to convince any Man, what an ill way it is, to seek for greater Edification in breaking the Communion of the Church by Schism and Separation; and therefore I shall make it plainly appear, that this is the true Scripture notion of Edification; and to that end shall consider the most material places, where this word is used.

Now the most proper signification of *οικοδομη*, which our Translators render by *Edification*, is a House or Building, and this is the proper Sense, wherein it belongs to the Christian Church, *Ye are Gods Husbandry, ye are Gods Building*, that is, the Church is Gods House or Building, *οικοδομη*. Thus the same Apostle tells us, that in Christ, *the whole Building* Eph. 2. 21. (*i.e.* the whole Christian Church) *fitly framed together*, groweth unto an holy Temple in the Lord. Matth. 21. 42. Hence the Governours of the Church are called Builders, *οικοδομηται*, and the Apostles are called Labourers Acts 4. 11. *together with God*, in erecting this Spiritual Building, and St. Paul calls himself a *Master Builder*. Hence I Cor. 3. 9. the increase, growth and advances towards perfection 10.

fection in the Church, is called the Building, or Edification of it. For this reason St. Paul commends Propheſie, or Expounding the Scriptures, before ſpeaking in unknown Tongues without an Interpreter, becauſe by this the Church receives Building or Edification. All theſe Spiritual gifts, which were beſtowed on the Chriſtians, were for the Building and Edifying of the Church. The Apoſtolic power in Church cenſures was for *Edification, not for Deſtruction*, *to Build, and not to pull down*, that is, to preſerve the Unity of the Church intire, and its Communion pure.

And we may obſerve that this Edification is primarily applied to the Church, *That the Church may receive Edifying: That ye may excel to the Edifying of the Church: For the Edifying of the Body of Chriſt.* And it is very obſervable: wherein the Apoſtle places the Edification of the Body of Chriſt, viz. in Unity and Love. *Till we all come in the Unity of the Faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect Man, unto the meaſure of the ſtature of the fulneſs of Chriſt. Till we are united by one Faith into one Body, and perfect Man.* And ſpeaking the truth in love, may grow up in him into all things, which is the head, Even Chriſt from whom the whole Body fitly joyned together, and compacted by that, which every joynt ſupplieth, according to the Effectual working in the meaſure of every part maketh increaſe of the Body, unto the Edifying it ſelf in love. This is an admirable deſcription of the Unity of the Church, in which all the parts are cloſely united and compacted together, as Stones and Timber are to make one Houſe; and thus they grow into one Body, and increaſe in mutual Love, and Charity, which is the very Building and Edification of the Church, which is Edified and Built up in love, as the Apoſtle adds,

that

that knowledge puffeth up, but charity Edifieth, this Builds up the Church of Christ; and that not such a common Charity as we have for all Mankind; but such a love and Sympathy, as is peculiar to the Members of the same Body; and which none but Members can have for each other, and now methinks I need not prove, that Schism and Separation, is not for the Edification of the Church; to Separate for Edification is to Pull down in stead of Building up.

But these Men do not seem to have any great regard to the Edification of the Church, but only to their own particular Edification, and we must grant, that Edification is sometimes applied to particular Christians in Scripture, according to *St. Pauls Exhortation, Comfort your selves together, and Edifie one another,* 1 Thes. 5. 11. *even as also ye do.* And this Edifying one another without question signifies our promoting each others growth and progress in all Christian Graces and vertues: and so the Building and Edification of the Church, signifies the growth and improvement of the Church in all Spiritual Wisdom and knowledge, and Christian graces, the Edification of the Church consists in the Edification of particular Christians, but then this is called Edification or Building, because this growth and improvement is in the Unity and Communion of the Church, and makes them one Spiritual House and Temple. Thus the Church is called the Temple of God, and every particular Christian is Gods Temple; wherein the Holy Spirit dwells, and yet God has but one Temple, and the Holy Spirit dwells only in the Church of Christ; but particular Christians are Gods Temple, and the Holy Spirit dwells in them, as living Members of the Christian Church; and thus by the same reason, the Church is Edified and Built up, as it grows into a Spiritual House and Holy Temple.

ple by a firm and close Union and Communion of all its parts, and every Christian is Edified, as he grows up in all Christian Graces and Vertues in the Unity of the Church.

And therefore whatever extraordinary means of Edification Men may fancy to themselves in a Separation, the Apostle knew no Edification, but in the Communion of the Church; and indeed if our growth and increase in all Grace and Vertue, be more owing to the internal assistances of the Divine Spirit, than to the external Administrations, as St. Paul tells us, *I have planted, and Apollos watered, but God gave the increase: So then, neither is he that planteth any thing, nor he that watereth; but God that gave the increase.* And the Divine Spirit confines his influences and operations to the Unity of the Church (as the same Apostle tells us, that there is but *one Body and one Spirit*, which plainly signifies, that the operations of this one Spirit, are appropriated to this one Body, as the Soul is to the Body it Animates) then it does not seem a very likely way for Edification to cut our selves off from the Unity of Christs Body.

3. The Third and Last Case still remains, which will be resolved in a few words, according to the Principles now laid down, which is this: *Whether it be Lawful to Communicate with two distinct and Separate Churches.* For this is thought of late days, not only a very Innocent and Lawful thing, but the true Catholick Spirit, and Catholick Communion, to Communicate with Churches of all Communions, unless perhaps they may except the Papists, and Quakers. It is thought a Schismatical Principle, to refuse to Communicate with those Churches, which withdraw Communion from us. And thus some, who Communicate ordinarily with the Church of England, make

1 Cor. 3. 6,
7.

Eph. 4. 4

Case 3.

take no Scruple to Communicate in Prayers and Sacraments with Presbyterian and Independent Churches, and Presbyterians can Communicate with the Church of *England*, and with Independents, whom formerly they charged with down-right Schism; and some think it very indifferent, whom they Communicate with, and therefore take their turns in all. But this is as contrary to all the Principles of Church-Communion, as any thing can possibly be.

To be in Communion with the Church is to be a Member of it, and to be a Member of two Separate and Opposite Churches, is to be as contrary to our selves, as those Separate Churches are to each other.

Christ hath but one Church, and one Body, and therefore where there are two Churches divided from each other by Separate Communion, there is a Schism and Rent in the Body, and whoever Communicates with both these Churches, on one side or other, Communicates in a Schism.

That the Presbyterian and Independent Churches, have made an Actual Separation from the Church of *England*, I have evidently proved already; and therefore if the Communion of the Church of *England* be Lawful (as those, who can, and ordinarily do Communicate with the Church of *England*, must be presumed to acknowledge) then they are Schismatics, and to Communicate with them is to partake in their Schism.

Now if Schism be an Innocent thing, and the true Catholick Spirit, I have no more to say, but that the whole Christian Church, ever since the Apostles times, has been in a very great mistake; but if Schism be a very great Sin, and that which will Damn us, as soon as Adultery and Murder, then it must needs be a dangerous thing to Communicate with Schismatics.

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who in this last Separation from the Church of Rome
 by charging Her with requiring Superstitions
 Communion, (which is the only thing that can justify
 their Separation, if it could be proved) there are
 others who Separate lightly and wantonly, for want
 of a due sense of the Nature of Church Communion
 and our obligations to preserve the Unity of the Spirit
 in the Bond of Peace. They have no notion at all of
 a Church; or no notion of one Church, or know not
 where the Unity and Communion of this Church
 consists; and these Men think it is indifferent, whe-
 ther they Communicate with any Church at all, or that
 they secure themselves from Schism by Communicat-
 ing sometimes with one Church, and sometimes with
 another, that they may choose their Church accord-
 ing to their own fancies, and change again, when-
 ever their humor alters. But I hope, who ever con-
 siderers carefully, what I have now writ, and attends
 to those passionate Exhortations of the Gospel to Peace,
 and Unity, and Brotherly Love, which cannot be pre-
 served but in one Communion, which is the Unity of
 the Body of Christ, and the Peace and Love of fellow
 Members, will not only heartily Pray to the God of
 Peace, to restore Peace and Unity to his Church; but
 will be careful, how he divides the Church himself
 and will use his utmost endeavours to heal the present
 Schisms and Divisions of the Church of Christ.

Now if Schism be an innocent thing, and the true
 Catholic Spirit, I have no more to say; but that the
 whole Christian Church, ever since the Apostles
 times, has been in a very great mistake; but if Schism
 be a very great sin, and that will damn us, as soon as Adultery and Murder, then it must needs
 be a dangerous thing to Communicate with Schismatics.

THE END